

## Andrew Jackson to John Henry Eaton, November 29, 1819, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JOHN H. EATON.

Nashville, November 29, 1819.

*D'r Sir:* This will be handed you by Doctor Brunaugh who will also hand you my answer to the report of a majority of the Senate on the *Seminole war* , with such documents as is thought relevant to that subject.

You will find by way of Postscript to my answer the subject of the reserve, and lease of the Salt spring noticed and the certificates of Doctor Brunaugh Capts Call, Easter, the sta[te]ment of Colo. Butler, and Major Wm. B. Lewis, and the certificates of Bell, McNairy and Capt Eastland forwarded with the other Documents.<sup>1</sup> Although the majority

<sup>1</sup> At the treaty-making with the Chickasaws in 1818 the Indians objected to selling the salt lick within the proposed cession. It was finally agreed that they should retain ownership of it, but lease it to a citizen of the United States. Maj. W. B. Lewis, who was present, obtained the lease without the knowledge of any of the whites present. When Jackson was charged with complicity Lewis made the following statement (Aug. 20, 1819):

“Having a considerable interest in the lands of the Western District, and feeling anxious that a treaty should be made, by which the U. States would acquire the right to that tract of country, I had determined, when I first heard of their appointment to accompany the commission to the Treaty Ground, with a belief that from the knowledge I had of that tract of country I might, possibly, contribute in some measure to the acquisition of so desirable, and to this state important, an object. It is true I held no appointment under the

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commissioners, nor did I want one; but it was found necessary in negotiating the Treaty, that it should be done thro' a secret, confidential agent, and in that capacity I had the honor to act, as will appear by reference to the commissioners Journal. For my service I received nothing, nor did I desire any compensation.

“The circumstances of my having acted as confidential agent, gave me an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with all the principal chiefs; by reason of which I was enabled *soon* to ascertain not only their views, but also their wishes, as it regarded the objects of the Treaty. When I ascertained that the Salt springs on the Sandy would certainly be reserved, and that Trustees were to be appointed on behalf of the nation to lease them out, I applied for a Lease on them myself—this I thought I had as much right to do as any other citizen. The Trustees observed to me that in as much as they would be compelled to lease them to some citizen or citizens of the U. States, they would as soon I should have them as any other person. This conversation took place the day before the Treaty was signed; but after the conditions of it had been agreed on. I immediately wrote a lease, and it was executed on the evening of the same day that the Treaty was signed. A few hours previous to our leaving the encampment, for home, Major Levi Colbert came to me and observed, Col Butler had said to him that when he returned to Nashville, he would send a friend to the nation to get the lick of them, and wished to know what he must say to him. I advised him not to let a *single individual* know that he had leased it to me, until after the Treaty should be ratified.

“After we got home, however, expecting from what Major Colbert told me at the Treaty Ground, that Col. Butler might be at some attempt to obtain a lease, I informed him that I had already gotten one. This, I am induced to believe was the first information had of it.”

Major Lewis's statement was corroborated by testimony of Col. Robert Butler, and by George Bell, Boyd McNairy, and Thomas Eastland (Aug. 23), by Dr. J. C. Bronaugh (Aug. 26), and by Richard J. Easter (Aug. 27). These are the papers referred to by Jackson, and show that Major Lewis obtained the lease of the salt lick without the connivance or

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knowledge of General Jackson. Lewis's speculation in this salt lick proved unsatisfactory. See Coffee to Jackson, Mar. 30, 1830.

of the committee, does not notice this subject in the report, still, as it originated, with one of the Senators, and communicated to Mr King one of the committee, as it is believed to poison his mind against me, and to procure if Possible his vote of censure, well knowing that he approbated the measures adopted in the prosecution of the seminole war, and particularly as the committee have arraigned my motives as a public officer—I have thought it proper to lay these documents before the Senate—however you will see, that, it is annexed to the answer on a seperate sheet, that if you and my friends should think it improper to be annexed that it can be seperated, and the P. S. used as a preface to the publication of the documents as you may Judge best, or in any way that you and my friends may think proper so that Congress may see them and Judge of the motives and actions of Colo. John Williams and others. There can be no question but it is proper that the senate and house of representatives should see them and the world in some shape or other—in this thing there was much depravity and malevolence in its author, that the world ought to see—so soon as I can with propriety, The honourable member shall be accountable to me, but in the mean time the senate and house of representatives ought to be informed on this subject.

I wish you to Consult Mr Crittendon<sup>2</sup> and others that you may have confidence in on this subject; what you may do will be approved by me. My friend Judge Overton has thought it improper that I should condecend to put in an answer at all. I have thought differrently, believing, when ever this subject is touched, it ought to be fully and effectually answered so that the weakest capacity that reads may understand. The answer is drew with Ch[r]istian mildness, brings before the reader the facts, and a referrence to the documents prove them. The letter recommended by Judge Overton as a substitute and herewith enclosed m[a]y serve the learned, and the man of research, but would not be understood or perhaps read but by few. I therefore prefer the answer But enclose the letter

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for your and Mr Crittendons consideration and determination—being on the ground you can better Judge.

2 John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, U. S. senator 1817–1819 and several times thereafter. Judge Overton (see vol. I., p. 13, etc.) had retired in 1816 from the bench of the supreme court of Tennessee.

I send on the documents eranged to be annexed to and presented with the answer as lettered—unless upon reading the answer another erangement should be preferred.

Should it so happen that you should prefer the letter to the President of the Senate then a differrent erangement of the documents will be necessary, and a republication of the Pamphlet corrected and amended by such additions from my answer as you may think proper to select particularly, that part that relates to the execution of Arbuthnot and ambrister and the right of the state to organize and officer its militia, to satisfy any call made upon it by the Executive of the united states. I send on an abstract, and erangement of the documents made out by Judge Overton, for this purpose I send on the letter and the erangement by the Judge, from the respect I have for his Judgt. knowing him to be actuated from the purests motives of friendship, more than with an expectation that the course he recommends will be preferred by you and Mr Crittendon in preference to my answer, as many of my friends agree that the answer ought to be preferred. But in this as in every other thing appurtaining to this unpleasant business I leave to your and my friends Judgtment, after having expressed my opinion on the subject—let all your deliberations be founded on this—that I fear not investigation, but court it, wherever it is necessary for the understanding of the nation.

I have wrote to Mr Crittendon a short note, I wish him to present the answer for this reason only—that it is known that you and myself are friendly, and he being from another state, it will have a much better impress upon the senate and the nation. There is one part of the answer not accompanied with documents, that is the stoppage of the amelia at Pensacola

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and another provision vessell at the Barancas, which made her Escape, These facts can be established by Colo. Gibson who is in the city and who I wish to be interrogated on this subject should it be found necessary indeed, his statement of this fact I would advise to be taken and appended to the answer before it is presented. Permit Correspondence of Andrew Jackson me to suggest for your consideration and that of Mr Crittendon, that when the answer with the documents are presented to the senate, that it be moved to refer them to a select committee, to whom shall be referred the report of, *the majority* of the committee of the Senate on the Seminole war of the 24th of February 1819 and that it be printed for the use of the members etc. By this order the whole will undergo, a full investigation and the answer and accompanying documents be placed before the nation. If it could be done, as many copies might be ordered as was of the report. This would only be Justice to me and to the nation.

You will have seen by the Georgia Journal that Genl Clark is elected Governor, and Genl Mitchel is under the Hackle for smuggling affrican slaves, The documents published, and others in the hands of the Executive must lead to an official investigation of his conduct and dismissal. The Election of Clark shews that Wm H Crawford has politically fallen never to rise again, and his quondam friend Colo. Andrew Irwin and his satelites in Bedford has failed in all their attempts for offices both from the President and State Legislature. I Have no time to give you any of the news of the place, but all friends *living* are well, I am yrs respectfully

P. S. I find in several of the printed documents errors which, has been corrected in copying. you will have the printing (if done) from the manuscrip, in my letter to the sec of War Dated washington city, I find a great error, which changes the sense and fact, in the 40th line of said letter as printed in the Pamphlet I find it printed, thus "to Pensacola", read instead thereof "toward Pensacola." I note this as you will find in my communication to the

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sec of war from Ft Gadsden detailing the information enumerated in the above letter, that I give that as my reason for marching in person towards Pensacola